

Claudia Nickolaus, *Robin Hood's Women: A Practice in Historical Thinking and Its Classroom Implications*

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

by

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April 2017

Expected Date of Graduation

May 2017

Abstract

Many people and cultures around the world celebrate the legend of Robin Hood, or someone like him. Many also celebrate the classic romance between Robin and his beloved Maid Marian. What many do not necessarily think about is the portrayal of women in the countless tales of Robin Hood, or how the historical context surrounding each tale influences its characterization of the women within them. Author after author has used this hero's life to communicate ideas and values about the relationships between men and women in their own time. Why should the context of each tale matter? I explore both the depiction and historical context of female characters in Howard Pyle's *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (1883) and Howard Green's *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (1956) as a practice in what it means to think historically. Following my analysis, I put the research to work with a compilation of practical classroom implications for teachers of history, thus demonstrating the universal need and value of historical thinking and inquiry.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Dr. Frederick Suppe for his constant dedication to my success as both my history professor and as my advisor throughout this project. His passion for Medieval European History was my first of many incredible experiences at Ball State.

I would like to thank Dean Emert, the Dean of Ball State University's Honors College, for encouraging me to do something that "puts a twinkle in my eye" for this project.

I would like to thank SDB for her fierce representation as a historian, woman, and professor. You inspire all of your students more than you'll ever know.

I would like to thank Mr. Philip Schmidt for "making me," write my first in-depth historical research paper in 10th grade. Your lessons on historical writing prepared me for an amazing college experience in history.

And finally, I would like to thank Mr. Brandon Wagler, my 8th grade social studies teacher, whose passion and enthusiasm for history made me want to be a history teacher in the first place.

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Process Analysis Statement

This thesis is an example of “doing history.” Doing history means using critical thinking, questioning, analysis, and synthesis to take information from multiple primary and secondary sources to develop an understanding and meaningful application of history. Primary sources are writings, art, and products that were created during the time in which they describe. For example, a Civil war diary by a soldier looking out into the fields of Gettysburg would be considered a Primary source. A secondary source is a product that was made after the time in which it describes, or from an outsider’s perspective at that time. For example, a modern day documentary on the Battle of Gettysburg would be considered a secondary source, even though it might include portions of primary source diaries, photographs, or newspaper articles within the documentary. My research process for this thesis demonstrates the Historical cycle of asking a question, researching, asking new questions, and ultimately coming to some sort of conclusion.

The process started with finding a topic that I was interested in, and Medieval History, particularly Robin Hood, was an excellent start. Then I had to do preliminary research about Robin Hood and his legends to narrow down the topic to a specific historical question that I could research. Most of the research in this stage came from secondary sources, since I was simply searching for general information about the time in which Robin Hood hypothetically lived. This research was relatively easy and quick and was completed by the end of the summer before my senior year.

Once I narrowed down my research to analyzing roles of women in specific versions of Robin Hood, the bulk of the historical research process began in the Fall Semester. I could not have done as successfully without the help of my advisor, Dr. Suppe. We decided to meet on a biweekly or so basis to discuss and provide goals or checkpoints for my research throughout the

semester. My time in between meetings was spent in the Ball State library using research databases and countless reference books to explore the backgrounds of the two Robin Hood authors I chose for this thesis. I started with basic outlines on both the treatment of women in the Robin Hood books, and the historical context for the authors. Originally, my focus was centered on using Maid Marian's relationship with Robin Hood. When I realized that one of my authors only included Marian in two sentences in the entire book, my focus had to change. The historical research process started over in a way shifting from Maid Marian to the treatment of all types of women in the Robin Hood Legends.

At our scheduled checkpoint meetings, Dr. Suppe introduced me to what is called the "Oxford Seminar" method of teaching and research. Basically this means that I brought my research and written work to the meeting, presented it to him as if he were unfamiliar with the content, and then he critiqued and asked questions on how we could further develop my work. What directions could I take with it? What areas needed more research to solidify? How could I use what I had so far to get to a meaningful series of conclusions at the end? What were my conclusions? These meetings were the most helpful aspect of this process. Learning from his experience in research, I was able to stretch my thinking by being open to more possibilities for end goals with the research. He brought of many ideas that I would have never thought of on my own and always had helpful suggestions for how to dig deeper in my research (specific databases, newspapers, book reviews, and more).

At one of our last meetings, he gave me a completely eye-opening suggestion that totally changed my perspective on writing. Traditionally I have been a person who must have thoroughly detailed outlines before I start writing a significant paper. I found it impossible to just "sit down and write," as my mother so often encouraged me to do in high school. Dr. Suppe and

I had discussed this before in our meetings and during this specific one I was really struggling with developing my conclusions. He suggested that I do a speed writing exercise: get a blank sheet of paper and a timer, set the timer for one minute, and just write like mad until the timer beeps. This is definitely not my style but I went back to the apartment and tried it. It worked like magic, for whatever reasons my creativity was flowing and I covered two pages in scribbled writings. I put down my pencil literally one second before the timer went off. When I sat back and looked at what I wrote, I had created an outline of logical thought that provided me with some major points to use in my conclusion! I could not believe my eyes because I had never been open to this type of unstructured free writing before, but I was overwhelmed at this burst of processing epiphany.

After months of research, writing, and rewriting, I was ready for the final stages including proofreading, citations, formatting, and so on. It also brought me to this process analysis statement. In simply writing these past few pages, I have reflected on much of my learning throughout my time at Ball State University. I have come so far, both as a historian and a future teacher, and the process of researching women in Robin Hood legends has confirmed my calling to be a social studies teacher. With that said, may the people reading this continue on and enjoy results of my historical research process.

Introduction

A figure hooded in Lincoln green who outsmarts a bumbling, greedy sheriff: who is he? Robin Hood of course! Robin Hood, the legend of old, who inspires readers today to act boldly in the name of justice regardless of the obstacles in front of them. Both young and old have not tired of the tale of Robin Hood, as witnessed in innumerable book, stage, film, and television renditions of his adventures. The core value of moral justice winning out in the end gives hope to people in America's current hostile and jaded sociopolitical environment. Beyond that key takeaway, people just enjoy the suspense, adventure, and romance within Robin Hood's life. In exploring Robin's romance with Maid Marian, there exists an interesting subtopic that comments of the role of women in Robin's legend. This research here will analyze two different Robin Hood renditions and their characterization of women in the overall Robin Hood experience.

While Maid Marian is usually considered the leading lady of Robin Hood literature, this research looks at other women as well: damsels in distress, kitchen wenches, and even a Queen. There are already direct stereotypes within that classification grouping of women. Using as examples, Howard Pyle's 1883 *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, and Roger Lancelyn Green's 1956 *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, I will demonstrate the importance, and process of, historical thinking and research in an as unbiased approach as possible. Whilst comparing the two renditions' take on women and women's roles, this paper will use both primary and secondary sources to determine the contextualized main source of influence on the authors' literary creations. In examining the role of women in the Legend of Robin Hood, these two authors are more influenced by the social norms of their time than their own personal experiences with women in the creation of their works; Pyle's women are traditionally (stereotypical?) subservient or nonexistent, while Green's women (specifically Maid Marian), are

more independent, bold, and active in Robin Hood's stories. The author's interpretations of the times and values about women seep into their treatment of women in their work and this is a foundational understanding in efforts to interpret the past in ways that will help people better understand the present.

Methods/Process

In keeping with historical methodological processes, before delving into their work, consider first a brief explanation of reasoning behind the choice of using Pyle's and Green's Robin Hood. At the start, I made sure to select two versions that contained a majority of the same tales by comparing chapter titles and indices. In an effort to explore geographic and historical factors of influence, I chose Pyle's version because he was an American children's author, published by an American publisher¹, writing in the 19th century. Conversely, Green was a British children's author, published by a British publishing company², writing in the 20th century. First, I read their books purely for enjoyment. Then I read them specifically looking at the women and their treatment. Upon finding similarities and differences, I then researched the authors' biographical information. Finally, I took a look at the historical and women's rights timelines surrounding Pyle and Green's lives in America and Great Britain. Pulling from social, personal, and literary influences on the two Robin Hood stories, I sought to use historical research methods to find out what influenced them the most in their treatment of Robin Hood's women.

Pyle Analysis

The first legend we are exploring is *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, by Howard Pyle. His work depicts two main categories of women: everyday women and the queen.

¹ Sterling Publishers.

² Puffin Classics.

Everyday women can be further analyzed into two sub-categories: background women, and women with plotlines. Background women included “merry lasses” who labored in the village and were captivated with Robin’s, “eyes [that] were as blue as the skies of June.”³ These also include young women at the local fair who, “looked at him [Little John] askance, thinking they had never seen a lustier youth.”⁴ Women without plotlines extended even into the countless ballads recorded in Pyle’s version. For example, Little John takes a day to live as a friar singing, “Ah, pretty, pretty maid, whither does thou go? I prythee, prythee, wait for thy lover also.”⁵ Combining these examples of women with countless similar ones in Pyle’s book, it is clear that the background women served one of two purposes: being pretty eye candy for men or being active in the husband hunt.

By far the most surprising of Pyle’s background woman is the legendary Maid Marian herself. Given her key association with the Robin Hood romance, I expected to see her play a major part in Robin’s life when I picked up Pyle’s book for the first time. However, Pyle relegates her to the position of a background woman, and not even Robin Hood’s sole lady of choice. Pyle mentions her a mere *two* times in the entire book. Her first appearance takes place in the prologue when Robin is walking along, “thinking of Maid Marian and her bright eyes, for at such times a youth’s thoughts are wont to turn pleasantly upon the lass that he loves best.”⁶ She is not physically present in the scene and Pyle downplays her significance by conveying that it is totally normal for young men to just daydream about women they like, especially the women they like best. Whether this implies that Robin liked multiple women or was faithful to Marian, we cannot tell. Regardless, Pyle makes it clear that Marian will not be the center of his Robin’s

³ Howard Pyle, *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (New York: Sterling Classics, 2004) 58.

⁴ *Ibid*, 69.

⁵ *Ibid*, 214.

⁶ *Ibid*, 6.

world from the very beginning. Her next mention is much later on in the book, when Robin is describing the perfect color of bread crust as, “the color of the hair of mine own maid, Marian.”⁷ Whether or not women in the story, Pyle’s life, or today’s times would consider that a compliment, I leave to the reader’s discretion. In the end, Pyle condenses Marian’s character down to her physical appearance and its appeal to Robin as a young man.

The other type of everyday woman in Pyle’s stories someone how has their own relatively large plot in the overall Robin Hood Legend. While this woman gets “screen time” so to speak, her roles are overall rather similar to those of the background women. This woman is Allen-A-Dale’s wife, Ellen of Deirwold. Ellen wished to marry Allen, but her father promised her to the wealthy Sir Stephen of Trent and Robin heard Allen’s woes and set out to stop the unhappy marriage. Ellen displays her dismay at her matrimonial mandate at the altar as, “she was all pale and drooping, like a fair white lily snapped at the stem...[she] looked up in bitter despair, like the fawn that finds the hounds on her haunch.”⁸ In the nick of time, Robin swoops in and saves the day, allowing Ellen and Allen to happily wed. A person today could say that Ellen had some agency in the sense that she did not want to marry a man whom her father promised her to (almost like being sold in the dowry system), and that Pyle used this story as social commentary on marriage practices that limit women’s voice. However, this tale, one of a woman being pledged to a man she does not love and then being saved to marry her true love, has been a literary plot that has been used over time as a common device.⁹ While Ellen has the relative honor of having her own name and plot line, Pyle keeps it centered on her lack of agency and Robin and Allen ultimately saving the day.

⁷ Ibid, 223

⁸ Ibid, 165.

⁹ Stith Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature Vol. 4* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1957) 393, K1371.1.

Most of Pyle's Robin Hood only contains brief mentions of the common village women. Surprisingly, the most powerful and prominent woman in his rendition of Robin Hood is royalty, Queen Eleanor to be exact. While loosely based on Queen Eleanor of Aquitaine, Pyle admits that historical accuracy not his goal with his work; it is instead to whisk you away to "a land of fancy...with no harm done."¹⁰ As a queen, even in fiction, it is important to remember that she is a social outlier with more power and influence than most women, thus giving her more opportunity for boldness of independence and agency in action. With several chapters devoted to her presence in Robin Hood's tale, she invites him to an archery contest behind the back of her husband (King Henry II), praises Robin's bold defense of the poor at the expense of the rich, and convinces Henry (at least for a short while) to grant Robin 40 days' reprieve from being hunted down by the King.¹¹ Robin himself was surprised to hear of her invitation and felt hesitant at first of her promise "to do all in her power to guard thee against harm...and furthermore sends thee, as a sign of great good will, this golden ring from her own fair thumb."¹²

Unlike the background women, virtually no mention is made of the Queen's physical appearance or flirtatious mannerisms. Given that Robin spends the vast majority of his life avoiding the clutches of Guy of Gisborne and the Sheriff of Nottingham, both doing the bidding of King Henry and his implacable desire for revenge upon Robin, it is highly unusual that Queen Eleanor would go so strongly against her husband. Pyle also lived during the reign of Britain's Queen Victoria, who was a powerful role model for women at the time. Considering the United States' social inferiority complex to Great Britain at the time, it is possible that she may have been an influence on Pyle's Eleanor as well. Taking into consideration both sides of the

¹⁰ Pyle, Howard. *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*. (New York: Sterling Classics, 2004) 4.

¹¹ Ibid, 243-279.

¹² Ibid, 246.

circumstances, Eleanor remains the only bold and relatively independently minded woman in all of Pyle's Robin Hood tales.

In concluding the exploration of Pyle's text, he does not allow women to take center stage almost ever, and his main exception is exceptionally rare within the sociocultural context of the time. Pyle's biographer, Lucien Agosta, also summarizes the women in Pyle's Robin Hood with the following observation:

Sexuality remains adolescent, even prepubescent: Robin thinks tenderly of Maid Marian on occasion, but she never appears; Little John carries on several adolescent flirtations of short duration; and though Allan a Dale marries Ellen in part 4 of the adventures, she disappears.... Women have no place in this Arcadia, with the exception of the motherly Queen Eleanor.¹³

Finding that Agosta supports this thesis' general conclusion on Pyle's women, we now look towards the specific source material that inspired Pyle's creations. Agosta notes that Pyle heavily relied on Joseph Ritson's compilation of Robin Hood ballads which was originally published in 1795. Ritson's collection is taken from various medieval sources of ballads, poems, songs, plays, and historical accounts. Pyle specifically used Chapters 8, 12, and 13 in Volume II of this work. These chapters cover Allen and Ellen A Dale's plot, Queen Katherine's (Pyle's Eleanor) invitation, and Robin's fleeing from London and King Henry's pursuit respectively.¹⁴ After reading the entirety of Ritson's collection, I discovered that there is an entire chapter devoted to Maid Marian and her relationship with Robin Hood (Vol. 2, Chp. 24). It is unlikely that Pyle was unaware of Ritson's emphasis on Maid Marian. Ritson's Katherine is very bold and independent, communicating that, "to her mind, it was bent with good intent to send for bold Robin Hood."¹⁵ This suggests that Pyle purposely left out Marian as a key focus in his own work in deference to

¹³ Lucien Agosta, *Howard Pyle* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1987) 27.

¹⁴ Ibid. 34, 36.

¹⁵ Joseph Ritson, *Robin Hood: A Collection of all the Ancient Poems, Songs and Ballades, now extant, Relative to that Celebrated English Outlaw* (London: John C. Nimmo, 1885) Vol. 2, 244.

the Queen Katherine/Eleanor plotline, giving the work a “prepubescent sexuality” as Agosta interpreted in Pyle’s biography.

Pyle’s Personal and Historical Context

After gaining a better understanding of the literary influence on Pyle’s work, we need to examine his personal life and general biographical information to analyze the extent to which it influenced his work. Howard Pyle was born into a family of artists in Wilmington, Delaware in 1853, less than a decade before the start of the American Civil War. His mother was a painter and spent countless days and nights reading to him, as well as encouraging his own art and literary creations. Pyle reminisced fondly about the time with his mother explaining, “First of all there was my mother- the best mother, I believe, that any boy ever had, unless it is the mother of my own boys. My mother loved good books and such pictures as were thought to be good in those days. Not only did she like such things herself, but she took care that I should like them, too.”¹⁶ It is clear from his own words that his mother played a huge part in not only his growing up, but his literary career as well. His primary education took place in private schools, and ultimately he founded his own art institute in Wilmington where he would go on to train and teach with some of the next generation’s greatest children’s book illustrators.¹⁷

His marriage to a singer named Anne Poole in 1881 yielded seven children. Two years after marriage, he released what is likely his greatest work (in competition with his *King Arthur*) *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*. Then tragedy struck in 1889 when, at age 7, Pyle’s oldest son Sellers died on a family trip in Jamaica; this is said by several literary critics to be the inspiration of his book, *The Garden Behind the Moon* (1895).¹⁸ In contrast to the positive, warm

16 Anne Commire, *Something About the Author Vol. 16* (Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1979) 228.

17 Wilmington Society of the Fine Arts. *Howard Pyle: Diversity in Depth* (Wilmington: Society of the Fine Arts, 1973) 5, 8.

18 Jennifer Baise, *Twentieth Century Literary Criticism Vol. 81* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1999) 377.

memories of his mother that kick-started his literary career, the death of his son was a shadow in his life that pushed him into a frenzied phase of increased numbers of illustrations published and a deepening of his involvement in his tradition of Swedenborgian faith.¹⁹ While Pyle started his career with illustration, his love of children's illustrations drew him to work as an author, but neither of these would have been likely had it not been for his nurturing, artistic mother.

After establishing a basic understanding of Pyle's biographic influences on his literary career, we now look to the sociocultural context of his time. Having a general knowledge of American history, we realize that Pyle was born into a country at the very start of its fight for women's rights and equality. The first major women's suffrage conference had taken place at Seneca Falls, New York just five years before Pyle was born. Then when Pyle was seven, the United States was thrown into a Civil War that put everything on hold for five long years. After the war, women were able to refocus on the fight for their rights. In 1890, the National Women's Suffrage Association (NAWSA) formed and this was when the women's suffrage movement took off in the United States. The movement continued to grow through various baby steps in legislation until the 19th Amendment was passed allowing all women the right to vote, just nine years after Pyle died in 1911 in Italy. For a more visual comparison of the women's rights movement see the chart provided in Appendix A on page 27.²⁰

Accounting for all of these historical events surrounding, and within, Pyle's life, we can conclude that he was born when the American women's rights era was nascent, the very beginnings of a fight that continues in different aspects to this day. Considering the literary, personal, and historical factors in Pyle's life, we are doing what historians do in looking at multiple factors that influence an event. We do this to gain a more well rounded background of

¹⁹ Wilmington Society of Fine Arts, 10.

²⁰ Timeline of Legal History of Women in the United States (National Women's History Project: nd); Simplified timeline located in Appendix A.

the event so that we can make a more meaningful interpretation of what happened, in our case, how women were depicted in two versions of Robin Hood and why it matters.

Green Analysis

Now we will take a look at the other Robin Hood story and determine how it compares or differs from Pyle's. Roger Lancelyn Green's Robin Hood takes a noticeably different path in the treatment of women. He too writes about women as background characters and with plotlines, but his work definitely has a very significant leading lady, Maid Marian. Green characterizes her as a bold, moderately independent, warrior of Sherwood Forest who plays significant parts in Robin's life throughout the stories. Also, more pointedly than Pyle might, Green tends to emphasize the negative aspects of men in his stories beyond just the Sherrieff of Nottingham starring as the main antagonist. Given that Green's version was published over a century after Pyle's, there is no doubt that we will find differences in their women. The goal now is to discover what they are and how they matter in this literary cannon.

Despite the fact that, similarly to Pyle, Green includes background women who are merely pretty, pleasant, or often, good cooks, the main focus of Green's female characters undoubtedly centers on Maid Marian. The first time we meet her reflects this when Green described her standing next to Robin, "tall and beautiful, but strong and fearless also, a very fitting wife for such man."²¹ Green describes her physical appearance, but then emphasizes her character and personality in reference to how well it matches that of Robin Hood. There are three main categories derived from her character that demonstrate her warrior-type of personality: her views on marriage, her various masculine skills, and her active role in Robin Hood's plotline.

²¹ Roger Green, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (London: Puffin Classics, 2010) 18.

Those familiar with the Robin Hood tales of old will know that traditionally Maid Marian is promised to the evil Guy of Gisborne, but her heart lies with the noble Robin Hood. Green does not stray from that general plot, but he does give Marian a very non-traditional voice in the matter. She and Robin are in the middle of their wedding when Guy swoops in and tries to force Marian to marry him and she declares, “You Robin are my lord and husband and no other shall ever be aught to me, though I live and die a maid!”²² In other words, despite the social stigma of remaining unmarried as a young woman and the potential socioeconomic insecurities she could face as Robin’s wife, she chose to vow herself to him without even being officially married. After the ceremony drama, her father was swayed that it would be best for her to marry Guy instead and when Marian takes off from home the following exchange occurs between the father and daughter:

‘Where are you off to now, wench?’
 ‘To the greenwood,’ said Marian calmly.
 ‘That you shall not!’ bellowed Lord Fitzwalter.
 ‘But I am going,’ said Marian.
 ‘But I will have up the drawbridge.’
 ‘But I will swim the moat.’
 ‘But I will secure the gates.’
 ‘But I will leap from the battlement.’
 ‘But I will lock you up in an upper chamber.’
 ‘But I will shred the tapestry and let myself down.’
 ‘But I will lock you in a turret where you shall only see light through a loophole.’
 ‘But I will find some way of escape. And, father, while I go freely, I shall return willingly. But once shut me up, and if I slip out then, I shall not return at all.’²³

This passage shows us Marian’s unwavering faithfulness to Robin because she is willing to defy her father, the man currently in charge of her security, and find any means to ultimately be with Robin. We later learn that she does indeed leave home and eventually becomes a part of Robin’s band of merry men. As this is Green’s legend of Robin Hood and not true nonfiction, one may

²² Ibid, 24.

²³ Ibid, 33.

interpret this as Marian being foolishly in love with Robin or as a boldness of character that is rarely found in women from the medieval age. Either way, Roger Lancelyn Green allowed for his Marian to have agency in her personal life as “married” to Robin of Locksley.

Not only does Green’s Marian get to have power over her life choice in marriage, but from the beginning, Green lets us know that Marian has many masculine skills that would be considered unusual for women of her time. The first skill she demonstrates is one of disguise and knowledge of forestry. Upon fleeing her father’s house, she disguised herself as a shepherdess named Clorinda. As Clorinda, she roamed the forest performing good deeds similar to Robin’s “steal from the rich, give to the poor” aspirations.²⁴ Purposely disguising oneself as a shepherd during that time would generally not be considered a pleasant vocation as they had very messy, uncomfortable living conditions. The disguise was to keep people from trying to return her to her “proper place” with her father. We know that she lived on her own in the forest for a relatively considerable time without any help from Robin Hood.²⁵ Once she has established herself as a woman of the woods, Green tells us she is a very good shot (with a bow and arrow that is) writing, “Lady Marian is as apt with a bow and arrow as most damsels are with a needle!”²⁶ She also excels at swordplay. She demonstrates this when she aids Robin Hood in the defense against traitors to King Richard as, “Marian was defending herself valiantly against the two swordsmen..., leapt forward to meet the knight, [and] parried [his] blow so dexterously that the sword flew from his hand.”²⁷ She was able to disarm a knight (theoretically trained from a young age in swordplay), which demonstrates that Green wanted her to go against the expected norms of femininity in two ways: she, a woman, had skills with a sword, and two, that they surpassed

²⁴ Ibid, 77-90.

²⁵ We learn later that she does reunite with Robin in the woods and joins his gang.

²⁶ Ibid, 31.

²⁷ Ibid, 195.

those of a man. Throughout the many fight scenes that Robin and Marian experience together, we see that she is rather skilled in manly pursuits of the time, all of which suit her well.

The third aspect of Marian's nontraditional character is that of her contributions to various points of Robin's own plotlines. Whereas Pyle barely mentions her at all, and never in the sense that she is physically present in the story, Green's Marian is the main cause or catalyst to several of Robin's sub-plots. First, as previously discussed, she actually *is* Robin's love interest throughout the story and eventually, upon the return of good King Richard the Lionheart, gets officially and legally married to him.²⁸ Secondly, Marian plays a large role in Robin's overall story through the introduction of George-a-Green, and his lovely lass Bettris, into Robin Hood's band. How did this friendship begin? Through the power of female insecurities and jealousy. Rumors were flying about England that there was a man in Wakefield just as good (if not better) as Robin Hood in strength and character named George-a-Greene, who also happened to have the heart of the land's most beautiful woman, Bettris. Marian eventually heard of these rumors, and informed Robin Hood of her desires, "Can we not go to Wakefield, I cannot bear to think that men say George-a-Greene could beat Robin Hood with the quarter-staff."²⁹ Robin comforts and assures her that that is *not* the case, and they travel together to find the rumored couple. When they do, all four become instant friends who stick together through their many adventures in Sherwood for years to come. While Marian was being a petty woman, it was she that made her case known to Robin, and he obligingly honored her request.

The third moment where Marian is vital in Robin's life is when she is responsible for the introduction of Friar Tuck (one of Robin's closest friends) into Robin's group. Contrary to many simplified, or "Disney-fied" renditions of Robin Hood, Green does not start the book with Friar

²⁸ Ibid, Chapter 21.

²⁹ Ibid. 182.

Tuck as a main character. Before Marian reunites with Robin in Sherwood, there is no Friar Tuck until one day, Marian wistfully wonders, “Robin, it grieves and surprises me that we have heard nothing of good Brother Michael.”³⁰ Their subsequent conversation explains that Brother Michael Tuck was Marian’s priest before she left her father’s home, he has gone missing, and he is rumored to be living as a secluded friar in Sherwood. Robin Hood, wanting to both alleviate his wife’s concerns and please her, responded, “I swear by the Virgin that I will go tomorrow and seek out his hermit. If he prove to be Michael Tuck, so much the better...if he be a good fellow, and a virtuous priest as well, we would be the gainers by his presence amongst us here in the forest.”³¹ That is, Robin himself had not felt previous need to have a friar in his band, but after Marian’s concerns and request that perhaps they could look for him, he decides that maybe having a friar around would be worthwhile. Green wrote so that without Marian, there would be no Tuck!

Not only does Green place Marian on the same pedestal as Robin, he also appears to take a stab at the flaws of men in society. Guy is depicted as a chauvinist, though not unexpectedly because he is often considered the traditional “bad guy” in many Robin Hood tales. He is also considered potentially sexist in his desire to dominate Marian, proclaiming, “A husband is the best curb for such as she.”³² Guy feels Marian is too free with her choice to marry Robin Hood and thinks he is just what she needs to “settle down.” Marian may also imply that Guy is violent in a conversation with Robin, who says, “Sir Guy of Gisborne is my sworn enemy,” and then Marian replies, “And my sworn lover, and for that I fear him all the more.”³³ While Green keeps

³⁰ Ibid, 91.

³¹ Ibid, 92.

³² Ibid, 34.

³³ Ibid, 190.

this book very child friendly, Guy's condescending and domineering attitude towards Marian and Robin indicates that Green wanted us to feel a particular negativity towards him.

Also, in the style of many before him, Green makes social commentary fun at the corrupt male clergy of the time. The most significant example of this is how Robin fools and brings down the great Bishop of Hereford. This bishop is known for his corruption earlier in the tales, and Robin sets out to put the bishop in his place. In a guise as a shepherd poaching the King's sheep, Robin pleads with the bishop, "Oh mercy, oh mercy! Oh, pardon us I pray! It ill becomes a man of your reverent and merciful profession to take away so many lives."³⁴ The bishop in turn commands, "No mercy for such as you. Therefore make haste- and I hope that Prince John hang the lot of you!"³⁵ The chapter continues on when Robin reveals himself and the bishop knows he has been made a fool. The same chapter powerfully brings the Bishop to his knee when King Richard reveals that he was the one traveling with the bishop, and has seen all that has occurred. That the bishop did not act mercifully as his profession called him to be was his downfall in the eyes of Robin and Richard. Green capitalizes on Richard's return to emphasize how corrupt the bishop had been (as well as King John), and Richard humbles them in his presence. This scene represents the final moral victory of the tale because Robin can now serve his community freely and leave his outlaw status behind.

Green's Personal and Historical Context

Now that we understand how Green characterizes women in his version of Robin Hood, let us take a look at his personal life and experiences. Using his biographical information, we will have a more complete view of his literary decisions about Robin Hood. Roger Lancelyn Green was born into a wealthy family from Norwich, England in 1918, at the end of the First

³⁴ Ibid, 250.

³⁵ Ibid.

World War. His family home had been tied to the Greens' name for over 900 years. As a child, he was sick often, which gave him ample opportunities to read in his father's library, famous for having over 4,496 volumes; Green biographer Margaret Meeks suggests that his time in that library undoubtedly, "furnished the inner landscape of his life and work."³⁶ Along with his father's encouragement, this library fostered Green's interest and growth in both reading and writing a wide variety of literature. This love extended into his adulthood when his first published works reflected on the lifestyle of children in wealthy, rural English homes. As a young man, Green developed a stammer, "which he discovered disappeared when talking to children."³⁷ This discovery, in part, was responsible for his new interest in writing specifically for a child-like audience.

The other main reason for a shift in his literary genres was due to the various influences from his Merton College education at Oxford, which he attended from 1937-1940. There he met the emergent widely acclaimed C.S. Lewis as his professor, and their relationship quickly evolved from student-teacher, to student-mentor, to ultimately the closest of friends and colleagues.³⁸ Lewis readers know that he used allegory, metaphor, myth, and legend as social commentary on his own times. Based on Green's second phase of published works that included of myths and legends that included his *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood*, it is highly probable that Green's relationship with Lewis heavily influenced his views on children's literature.

One of the beset places we can learn about Green thoughts on children's literature is through his own 1946, *Teller of Tales*, which is a series of literary criticisms and praises of other

³⁶ Margaret Meeks, "Green, Roger Gilbert Lancelyn (1918-1987)" in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online (Oxford: OU, 2004). 1.

³⁷ Doris De Montreville and Donna Hill, *Third Book of Junior Authors* (New York: H.W. Wilson Co., 1972) 110.

³⁸ Roger Green and Walter Hooper, *C.S. Lewis: A Biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1974) 7-11.

contemporary authors (written ten years before his *Robin Hood*). For example, he praises children's author Catherine Sinclair's *Holiday House*:

The author endeavoured to paint that species of noisy, frolicsome, mischievous children which is now almost extinct, wishing to preserve a sort of fabulous remembrance of days long past, when young people were like wild horses on the prairies, rather than like well-broken hacks on the road: and when, amid many faults and many eccentricities, there was still some individuality of character and feeling allowed to remain.³⁹

In this commentary, Green shows his nostalgia and appreciation of a time gone by when children were allowed to simply be children instead of being strictly confined mini-adults. We see further criticism of that particular type of writing for children when Green writes about Rudyard Kipling's "school stories [that] had been mainly either horrid warnings of the dreadful punishments lying in wait for dreadful evils...or rather sentimental and nauseatingly loyal concoctions of "the school spirit" and the highest moral aims."⁴⁰ Here we see direct criticism of current trends in children's literature that seek to provide moral pathways to being a socially appropriate young boy or girl in the eyes of adults. *Teller of Tales*, written in the prime of his personal and literary relationship with C.S. Lewis and eight years before his *Robin Hood*, shows us his new outlook on what his own children's work should resemble. His transition from sickly child to avid reader, eager student, professional colleague, cherished mentee, and writer of children's literature shows us how each of these phases contributed to his creation of *Robin Hood*.

As already noted, Green was born at the end of World War I in November of 1918. He was also born in England, the country that Pyle's America had looked up to as sophisticated in the realms of literature, art, history, education, culture, and more. England, providing the

³⁹ Roger Green, *Tellers of Tales* (Leicester: Edmund Ward Ltd., 1953) 15.

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 215.

example for the United States established various voting, property, marriage, and sexual assault laws for women that, with each law, slowly increased women's rights and autonomy in society from 1910-1920. Next, the 1930s and 40s reflected increased rights for women in the health care sector. Then after the Second World War, England progressed towards Equal Pay measures and women's representation in the House of Lords.⁴¹ Green wrote his Robin Hood in 1956, after these major success in the women's rights movement that influenced how greater society treated women in England (and through global influence, the world). Whereas Pyle died nine years before American women could vote, Green was born in the same year that allowed all women over 30 to vote in England. This is a significant distinction between the historical context of Pyle and Green, and almost undeniably influenced their beliefs about the roles and rights of women in their respective societies. We can see this difference manifested in how they each treat the women in their Robin Hood stories.

A strong example of this is the choices that both authors made when thinking about how much of Ritson's ballade to include in their stories. As mentioned in the analysis of Pyle, he clearly did not use chapter 14 of Ritson's second volume that was all about Maid Marian and her role in Robin's life. On the other hand, we know from previous research that Green specifically based chapters 7 (Maid Marian), 8 (Friar Tuck), and 14 (Allen-a-Dale) on Ritson's ballads about Maid Marian and Robin Hood.⁴² This shows us how significant the choices that authors make are when it comes to the content of their product.

Analysis Conclusion

After looking at the content and various contexts of Green's Robin Hood, we have learned how his home life, education, and historical experiences influence his creation of a

⁴¹ The Women's Timeline (Manchester Metropolitan University, 2008).

⁴² Roger Green, *The Adventures of Robin Hood* (London: Puffin Classics, 2010), xv-xix; Located in Author's Note section.

relatively liberated Maid Marian as the Queen of Sherwood Forest. His work reflects the changing values and roles of women throughout his lifetime rather than the rather traditional values that shaped English life in 1918. In contrast, Howard Pyle's women in Robin Hood reflect more of the traditional values of the time in which he lived, rather than the personalized influence of his mother in his career. Regardless of their treatment of Robin Hood's women, they both held strong convictions that showed in their work about the importance of being a child and writing for children. Pyle writes for his traditional audience, while Green writes for a group of people during changing times and attitudes. There are outside influences that affect the work of these two authors. No man or woman is an island and our past and present shape the future that we create.

Overall Conclusions

After all of this analysis, what did we learn, why does it matter, and how can we use it in real life? This practice in historical thinking and research has several modern day implications. First, it teaches and demonstrates the prevalence of historical thinking in both history and outside circumstances. This means that in the steps we took in analyzing these secondary sources on Robin Hood and medieval history, we practiced sourcing and contextualization. Sourcing is about examining the meta-data of a source (date of creation, author, intended audience, medium, publishing information, etc.) and interpreting how those factors influence the content of the source. In this case, I chose authors and publishing companies from different sides of the Atlantic, as well as different centuries to demonstrate change over time and in different geographic regions. The skill of contextualization asks the reader to consider concurrent historical events, values, and practices and how they could affect the content and presentation of ideas within a source. For this study, I researched the authors' biographical and historical context

to see what it was like to live and write during their time and how that could specifically affect the treatment of women in their literature.

The process of answering questions through historical thinking and analysis can apply to any situation. For example, instead of analyzing women in Robin Hood, an individual can gain a broader and deeper understanding of presidential platforms in debate through the sourcing and contextualizing of the media's presentation of each candidate. On an every day level, we need to be able to use sourcing and contextualization to assess the credibility and value of the bombardment of advertisements we experience to evaluate whether or not we think that a particular product is worth our time, money, and effort. We make choices every day based on the information we encounter, and the more we understand about factors that influence that information, the more satisfying and informed decisions we can make.

Classroom Implications

Given the importance of these historical thinking skills, society needs to begin practicing them at a young age. This research on Robin Hood and women is an effective example of how, for example, teachers could use Robin Hood to teach both medieval historic content and historical thinking. While my analysis covers only one aspect of Robin Hood's history, the treatment of women, there are countless other themes a teacher could emphasize using historical analysis. This research demonstrates a specific pattern and method of research that could be adapted for middle school, high school, or even young college aged students. Ultimately, the process is the same, but by using various scaffolding and learning enrichment supports, a teacher could use historical thinking to teach any aspect of Robin Hood as a translation of teaching aspects of medieval English life.

My example chose two versions of Robin Hood that are on the middle school accelerated reading list because of my interest in teaching middle school upon graduation. However, a teacher could use any versions of his or her own intentional choice depending on what aspects of history and historical thinking the teacher desired to emphasize. For example, a question and analysis guide for discussion like Signet Classics provides, in accompaniment to Green's version of Robin Hood, would be an ideal way to start a unit on Robin Hood.⁴³ The thought provoking questions focused on analysis, historical connections, and reading and writing skills in this guide would be helpful for teachers wishing to teach students historical research using the processes demonstrated in my own research. This guide prods students toward critical reading and understanding of texts in both English and History. An effective example of this takes place in one of the guide's essay prompts:

Robin Hood is presented through much of the novel as an idealized man—he can outwit, outshoot, or outrun any man in all of England. However, despite his exceptional nature, he is not perfect. After thinking back over the novel, consider Robin Hood's flaws and actions. Then, write a response to explain how it is possible for an imperfect individual to be considered heroic.⁴⁴

Instead of using popular knowledge about the great and wonderful legend of Robin Hood, this prompt asks students to look at the other side of the story in exploring his flaws. As a teacher striving for increased historical thinking, I would amend the prompt to add, “How do his flaws contribute to a deeper understanding of literary interpretation of historical times and events? How does the author's interpretation affect his illustration of history?” In other words, I am looking at how students can use Robin Hood's flaws and positive qualities to better understand

⁴³ See *Discussion questions and Deepening Understanding Questions* Signet Classics' "A Teacher's Guide to the Signet Classics Edition of *The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* by Howard Pyle" in Appendix C on pg. 46.

⁴⁴ Allen Kromer, *The Teacher's Guide to... The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood* (New York: Penguin Group, 2004) 18-19.

how an author interprets history, and how that affects the message contained in this historical fiction.

Beyond the teaching of historical thinking and practical uses in school classrooms, this research provides historical significance as well in the analysis of women in literature over time. Robin Hood is a powerful way to teach medieval history, and specifically women's medieval history, to students because it is engaging and full of interesting themes including romance, adventure, and the ever-exciting battle of good versus evil. This analysis provides students with an opportunity to learn about women's roles and expectations in medieval times (looking at Ritson's collection, and other sources for Pyle and Green), as well as in 19th century America and 20th Century Britain. By using sourcing and contextualization, we learn how the treatment and perceptions of women has changed over time and in different places. We learn that people are products of their past, but various influential factors can catalyze people to break social molds. At the end of the day, the goal is to get the audience to understand that women's rights were not always what they are today and we cannot take this for granted. We must use the struggle for women's equality over half a millennium to observe growth and improvement, but also to realize that we need to keep improving from where we are today. My Robin Hood study shows us that our literature is a product of our times, and we can take this and use it to change our own times for the better.

In my historical exploration of women in Robin Hood legends, I used legitimate ways of thinking and doing in history to achieve a broad understanding of women's roles in society and the need for continued growth. Through the use of historical thinking and analysis of secondary texts, I found two literary figures who demonstrated the values of their times in their work: Pyle by sticking to traditionally confined appearances and powers of women, and Green who

demonstrated the expansion of rights and powers of women in his time through his Maid Marian. The power of historical thinking is that we use these processes to learn, discover, and remember valuable, foundational patterns in society. We then use those skills to assess how we can grow, move on, and expand our understanding of our shared humanity. Meaningful exploration of the past can unlock uninhibited potential in our future.

My Personal Growth

In my exploration of women in the Robin Hood legend, I have learned at least three valuable things about history and myself. First, the historical inquiry process never ends. It is all about questions. I began with a question originally with the goal to analyze Robin Hood's romance with Maid Marian, but found that she was not a major player in both versions that I studied. So, as a historian, I must ask a new question, which is how I started observing the general treatment of women as reflected in both the books and the historical contexts in which they were written. Then, I assumed that women would likely play a large role in Green's life, but not Pyle's due their various characterizations of women in their stories. However, again I was surprised to find that, at least in their personal lives, women seemed to have a much greater influence in Pyle's life as an author than in Green's life. I have learned to work with whatever the evidence presents. As a true historian, it is my obligation to ask open-minded questions and search for evidence, instead of searching for evidence that gives me only a specific answer to my question. Sometimes, more often than not, historians will find themselves forced to juxtapose a wide variety of perspective on an issue, and my research has helped me develop this skill.

The second major thing I have learned in this experience is that I have an increased interest in women's history. As a student teacher about to enter the professional world, I find myself inspired to learn even more about women's history throughout the ages. I thought this

project would teach me about a medieval love story, but instead it exposed me to more complex ideas about men, women, and their relationships throughout history. As I student teach this semester, I am witnessing a world of historical resources that are predominantly from the male perspective. Considering my experiences in the realm of Robin Hood, I will strive find the female perspective and expose my students to new (or forgotten) female experiences in history. I want my classroom to be inclusive and diverse in its content to foster empathy and harmony in future generations of life long learners.

Possibly the greatest lesson I have learned throughout this thesis research, is that I am capable. I am capable of historical thinking, research, analysis, and composition. I can, in fact, do what my almost four years here at Ball State University has set out to teach me. That in itself is extremely empowering. I know now that I have experience in the skills and research that I want to teach my students. I know that I can do it, along with the help of a global community of historians through Internet and library assistance. I know that I am capable of becoming a member of that global community, with the goal of having a local impact through this work and my future students. This honors thesis experiences, coupled with my quality collegiate education, has prepared me to enter the adult world ready to make a difference wherever I decide to plant my roots as a teacher.

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This source provides insight about Green's experience as a member of the canonical literary group, the Inklings. It describes the development and literary manifestations of the group's views about women in literature and society.

Green, Roger, and Hooper, Walter. *C.S. Lewis: A Biography*. New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1974.

This source illustrates the close and significant relationship between Green and C.S. Lewis and how that relationship influenced their writing.

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This source contains many of Green's literary criticisms of other contemporary authors from his time including Lewis Carol, Rudyard Kipling, and Catherine Sinclair.

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<http://www.penguin.com/static/pdf/teachersguides/robinhood091813b.pdf>.

This source is published through the same company that published the Green version of Robin Hood in this research. It is an excellent way for teachers to use various teaching, questioning, and thinking strategies to teach history, English, and writing to students at a variety of levels.

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This source derives from one of the most extensive collections of Pyle's work still in existence today. It provides a detailed chronology of Pyle's life and works as well.

Appendix A: Howard Pyle/Historical Context Timeline

Howard Pyle

1795: Ritson's Collection Published

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-

1853: Born in Wilmington, DE

April 12, 1881: Marries Anna Poole
(Singer)

1883: The Merry Adventures of
Robin Hood

1889: 1st Son Sellers dies on
Jamaica Trip

1894: began teaching illustration at
the Drexel Institute of Art

1900: Starts Teaching @
"Brandywine School" of artists

1903: King Arthur Published

1911: Dies in Italy

1848: Seneca Falls Convention

1850s: Major Names start Suffrage
Movement

1860-65: American Civil War

1890: NAWSA forms, suffrage fight
mainstream

1903: National Ladies Trade Unions
Form

1920: 19th Amendment Passed



Appendix B: Roger Green/Historical Context Timeline

Roger Lancelyn Green

1918: Born in Family Estate
(Norwich, England)

1937-1940: Merton College;
Meets Mentor C.S. Lewis

1948: Married June Burdett
(actress)

1953: King Arthur and the
Knights of the Round Table

1956: The Adventures of Robin
Hood

October 1987: Death

1910-20s: Property Rights,
Voting, Marriage/Sexual
Assault Cases, etc.

1920s-30s: First Nonfiction
(reflects country life); Women
vote, marriage equality. Women
in their own right as people

30s-40s: Lady conscription;
lady health care

50s: Equal Pay and Ladies in
House of Lords

60s: Marriage Property,
Abortion/Contraception Rights,
Union/Labor victories